

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE  
SMALL BUSINESS AND  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

February 5, 2015

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am deeply concerned about the deteriorating conditions in Venezuela, and your Administration's tepid reaction to President Maduro's crackdown on innocent civilians. I urge you to fully implement the provisions in the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-278), which you signed into law on December 18 and which mandates asset freezes and visa restrictions on persons involved in human rights violations in Venezuela.

As you know, February 12 marks the anniversary of massive public demonstrations in Venezuela, in reaction to President Maduro's incompetent rule and violent repression of tens of thousands of peaceful demonstrators. As a result of President Maduro's ongoing crackdown, more than 40 people have died, there have been at least 50 documented cases of torture by government forces on peaceful demonstrators, and more than 1700 individuals await trials by a Venezuelan judiciary fully controlled by President Maduro – including opposition leader Leopoldo Lopez, who has been held in the Ramo Verde military prison for a year. On January 27, Maduro's regime approved an order by Defense Minister Vladimiro Padrino authorizing the Venezuelan armed forces to use lethal force – including firearms and chemical weapons – to control public demonstrations. The need for decisive action by the United States could not be clearer.

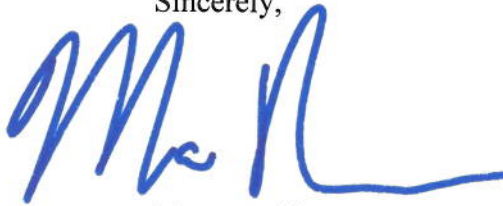
As the situation spirals out of control and there is a greater divide between the Venezuelan people's aspirations for democratic order and economic prosperity and Maduro's government's determination to cling to power by whatever means necessary, the provisions in the Venezuelan Defense of Human Rights and Democracy Act give you powerful means to ensure persons involved in human rights violations in Venezuela pay a heavy price for their actions.

Specifically, P.L. 113-278 mandates asset freezes and visa restrictions on persons that have perpetrated or are responsible for ordering, or otherwise directing significant acts of violence or serious human rights abuses in Venezuela, persons that have directed or ordered the arrest or prosecution of a person primarily because of their legitimate exercise of freedom of expression or assembly, and persons that have knowingly materially assisted, sponsored, or provided significant financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, the commission of such human rights violations.

While I support the decision by the Department of State to deny U.S. visas to an additional but undetermined number of human rights violators in Venezuela, I am deeply concerned about the lack of progress in imposing the more powerful financial sanctions mandated by this law. Given the rapid decline of economic and security conditions in Venezuela, I urge you to fully implement the provisions in the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act of 2014.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of great importance for my constituents in Florida and our nation's interests in the Western Hemisphere.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'MR', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marco Rubio  
United States Senator